assuming they were innocent, could be the motive beliind their arrest. When it was announced that two of them, Mr. Thornton and Mr. MacDonald, had made confessions, bewilderment increased. That Russians should confess was scarcely surprising, and in keeping with the Dostoevsky tradition, which, though past its prime, still lived.[15] A Dosteovsky character, invited to confess, might be expected to respond readily and voluminously, and in confessing, not to be bound by probabilities, or by any concern for consistency; but an English engineer was different. If he confessed, it must either mean that he was guilty, or that he had been drugged or otherwise deprived of the command of his faculties. Many highly coloured accounts, some purporting to be first-hand,[16] of Ogpu technique in handling recalcitrant prisoners, appeared; and a Tibetan drug was mentioned whose effect was to make docile the most resolute heart.

The engineers' trial was lavishly reported, Mr. Cummings professing himself on the whole satisfied that it was correctly conducted. Mr. MacDonald, the only one of the engineers who had been retained in custody, persisted in his confession, though at one point in the proceedings he retracted it. This resulted in a short adjournment, after which he resumed his plea of guilty. The Russians who had been accused of complicity, and who were tried at the same time, confessed their guilt with appropriate abandon and contrition, perhaps stimulated by the summary execution, before the trial began, of thirty-five of their fellow-countrymen. A verdict of guilty was brought in against all the

[15] As has often happened, the crumbs from the highbrows' table provided material out of which Hollywood concocted a banquet of its own; *Crime*

*and Punishment* vanished from Bloomsbury bookshelves, to reappear as a.
breath-taking drama of *Love . . . Hate . .. Fear battling in a mighty conflict
of emotions.'

[16] Some were first-hand—for instance, Professor V. Tchernavin's account
of the treatment he received at the Ogpu's hands. This included what
prisoners called 'the conveyor' which involved their being made to run
from storey to storey of the Ogpu Headquarters until they either confessed
or dropped exhausted. See also Professor Tchernavin's *I Speak For The
Silent.*